breath

3

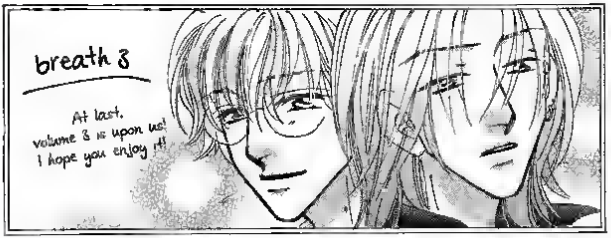
Chifumi Ochi

We've been together since the day we were born.
I'll never give you over to anyone else
and I'll use any means possible to keep it that way
my precious, precious brother.

My...
Arata.
of
breath

Still no messages.
...
it's been ten days now.
rustle

Ten days since I stopped by to pick up my bus pass holder
S-SORRY!
I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME UNANNOUNCED.
SORRY, BUT...
...I WAS JUST ON MY WAY OUT.
OH!
DUDE, IT'S FINE.
I SHOULD BE APOLOGIZING.


breath 3
At last, volume 3 is upon us! I hope you enjoy it!

That's the last thing he said...
. before I left.
I wonder what was up with him.
He wasn't acting like himself,
but I can't figure out why.
Hmm...
Yeah.
I'm fine. Just fine.

At that moment,
I was sure he was going to kiss me
gulp
Wh-wh-wh-
What the heck...
...am I thinking?!
tumble
Ack!
Oh, lordy!
twirl
It almost sounds like I was hoping for a kiss!
twirl
No, no, no!
Spinning without thinking

I'm the one who's acting strange now
...
...
What's
huff..
huff..
huff..
Gotten into me?
Made himself dizzy
I can't deny the fact that...
...I haven't been able to get Yanagi-kun out of my head!
When did I start to feel this way?
bluuush
But how?
How could this happen?

And yet now, I find myself
It was definitely not the best way to start a relationship.
The first time we met...
It just doesn't make sense!
...and all the times after...
...
feeling
...
Feeling what?!
clutch
gasp
WAH!
Spinning again.
Oh-oh...

ERR ...
Did they see me?
Did they see me (spinning in my seat until I was dizzy)?
Clatter
UM ...
LET ...
LET ME ..
I MEAN ...
Uh, how do I explain this?
...
...WELCOME BACK?
• Was in the office all along.
• Coworkers went out for lunch.
• They just got back.
Ah... 6
ERR ...
...RIGHT
WE'RE BACK...
Pfft!
Did I just see what I thought I saw?
Hahahaha!
WHAT'S WITH THE AWKWARD GREETINGS, FELLAS?
KIRISHIMA-KUN, THANKS FOR TAKING CALLS WHILE WE WERE OUT
YOU GET ANY GOOD CALLS?
I'll cover next time
NO, NOT PARTICULARLY.
I SEE.
B-Buzz
SOME

UH!
ERR..
IT WASN'T ...
I spoke too soon!
I GUESS YOU WERE SO BORED THAT YOU DECIDED TO SPIN AROUND IN YOUR CHAIR.
Thank goodness
Looks like I stopped before they could–
SO,
Gasp!!
So they saw me after all!!
I'll never...
~~~...
At least, not exactly
IT WASN'T LIKE THAT.
ahhaha!
KIRISHIMA-KUN, YOU SURE ARE BEING EXPRESSIVE AND FUNNY TODAY.
Uh-huh..
...ive this one down!
bluuuush
~~~

SO, DID SOMETHING NEW AND EXCITING HAPPEN?
Straight Ball!
Wh-what?!
Heh heh heh
YEAH, I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
CONSIDERING HOW HE USUALLY ACTS, THIS REALLY IS SURPRISING!
That's for sure.
Huh?!
RIGHT, GUYS?
Don't look at us!
WELL, I WOULDN'T EXACTLY CALL IT FUNNY...
More like
SURPRISING, PERHAPS?
NOPE, NOTHING OF THE SORT.
YOU SURE?
No funny calls or nothin?
NO REALLY!
..WHILE WE WERE OUT
I WAS WONDERING IF SOMETHING UPSETTING HAPPENED TO MAKE YOU LOSE YOUR USUAL COOL DEMEANOR.
OH!
WH-WHAT
GAVE YOU THAT IDEA?
Yeah, I'm definitely getting the silent treatment.
WELL,
...

BUT EVEN IF THERE WERE SOME-THING,
IT'D BE TOO PERSONAL TO TALK ABOUT.
Jasp
blwush
WAIT!
KIRI-SHIMA-SAN?!
DASH
UM...
ANY-WAY!
I'M GOING TO WASH MY FACE!
Y'KNOW...
clomp clomp clomp
...
There he goes

What's gotten into Kirishima-san?!
And why did he bring up the personal stuff?
We all know what that means!
When I saw Kirishima-san spinning in his chair like that,
AFTER ALL!
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT WAS HIM AT FIRST!
I couldn't believe it myself!
Right? So I'm not alone on this!
...I REALLY THINK SOMETHING'S UP.
I agree
THERE MUST BE SOMETHING.
YEAH!
IT FELT LIKE SOMETHING WAS DEFINITELY DIFFERENT ABOUT HIM.
RIGHT.
HE DID SEEM FLUSTERED WHEN I FIRST ASKED.
It must be something serious
...THAT YOUR IMPRESSION OF A PERSON WILL CHANGE DEPENDING ON HIS EXPRESSION.
I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED...
WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...
...he's having trouble with his woman?
Could it be...
Yippee!
HMM...

...UP UNTIL NOW, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN COLD, RIGHT?
KIRISHIMA-SAN WAS FLAWLESS AT HIS WORK.
BUT ASIDE FROM THAT, HE HARDLY MADE ANY EXPRESSIONS AND WAS HARD TO TALK TO.
BUT NOW,
AFTER SEEING...
...HIM ACT THAT WAY,
NO, WHAT I MEAN IS...
WELL, DUH.
IT FINALLY FELT LIKE HE'S A NORMAL HUMAN BEING.
JUST LIKE THE REST OF US.
I GET IT NOW.
RIGHT?
You've got a point.
OOPS!
LOOK AT THE TIME, GUYS.
I SAY IT'S TIME WE GET BACK TO WORK.
Right on!
Goooo, work!

SHAAAA
splash
splash
Phew...
Ah
I still can't believe that happened!
...
First they catch me acting like a kid, and then I blurt out that "it's personal" stuff!
No one to blame but yourself
flop
flop
I thought smoke was about to come out of my ears!
Seriously,
what's the matter with me?

If I keep slipping up at the office,
It won't be long before
badump
Takashi notices something's up, too
Wait a second. "My feelings"?
If he ever confronts me about it, I won't be able to talk my way out of it!
clutch
What will I do then?
How will I be able to explain...
...my feelings for Yanagi-kun?

Then what did I mean
by "my feelings"?
How do I really feel...
...!
No way!
What?!
I can't really mean that!
...
...about him?
sPlash
sPlash
sPlash
It sounds like...
...I'm actually...
How can I be thinking all this?!
SHAAA
~~~!
There's seriously something wrong with me!
~~~

I'M HEADED HOME NOW.
GOOD JOB, EVERY-ONE.
RIGHT BACK AT YOU!
GUESS IT'S TIME WE PACKED UP, TOO.
YAMA-UCHI-SENPAI!
WANNA GRAB SOME DINNER?
I'M STARV-ED!
Yaaawn
SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.
BUT IT ISN'T PAYDAY YET, SO LET'S AIM CHEAP.
WAY AHEAD OF YOU
We all get our checks on the same day
CLATTER
...In love with—

Nop
UH..
KIRI-SHIMA-SAN?
Still embarrassed by what happened earlier...
Huffff
WANNA JOIN US?
HUH?
FOR DINNER.
Remember?
OH. UH...
AS LONG AS YOU'RE OKAY WITH IT, KIRISHIMA-SAN.
Let's all go together.
YOU ... MEAN IT?
I WOULDN'T INVITE YOU IF I DIDN'T!
Would I?

OF COURSE ...
.. I'M OKAY WITH IT.
GREAT!
Count me in!
THANKS... GUYS.
That settles it, then!
So, where to?
You don't mind a drink or two, do you?
NO
Virrr
OOPS!
LET ME TAKE THIS
Sorry.
Not a problem!
beep
HELLO?

HEY, ARATA?
IT'S ME.
YOU STILL AT WORK?
No.
We were just getting ready to go.
WHAT'S THAT?
TONIGHT?
...
TO-NIGHT'S... NOT SO GOOD.
I PROMISED TO GO OUT TO DINNER WITH SOME COWORKERS.
Oh.
Is that so?
THAT'S FINE, THEN.
I WAS SUPPOSED TO GO OUT LATER ANYWAY.
I JUST CALLED TO SEE WHAT YOU'D BE DOING FOR DINNER.

THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY 'BOUT ME.
So it seems.
RIGHT.
IF YOU'RE GOING OUT TO DRINK, TAKASHI,
MAKE SURE TO EAT SOMETHING FIRST.
Yeah, yeah
Just don't stay out too late, Arata.
YOU'VE STILL GOT WORK TOMORROW...
...SO MAKE SURE YOU GET BACK BY 10.
THANKS.
I WILL.
TAKE CARE, THEN!
Later.
beep
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED.

EVERYTHING OKAY?
You don't have to leave, do you?
NO, IT'S FINE.
IT WAS JUST MY LITTLE BROTHER CHECKING UP ON ME.
SORRY ABOUT THAT
NO WAY!
WE DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD A BROTHER.
YUP, I DO.
COOL!
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE AN ONLY CHILD.
Let's get going already!

SORRY I TOOK SO LONG,
KOHSHI.
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR

TEN?
HOW CAN YOU BE SO LATE WHEN YOU INVITED ME OUT HERE?
clatter
I SAID I WAS SORRY.
DON'T FORGET THAT YOU'RE THE ONE WHO LEFT ME HANGING AT AKKUN'S BAR BEFORE.
FINE, THAT MAKES US EVEN.
HERE'S YOUR...
...GIN AND LIME, TEN.
...
THANKS.
YOU'VE TURNED ME DOWN NEARLY EVERY TIME SINCE THEN!
AND YOU EVEN HUNG UP ON ME THAT ONE TIME!
SIGH.
TALK ABOUT COLD!
SORRY.
I JUST HAVEN'T BEEN IN THE MOOD TO GO OUT LATELY.
OH?

WELL, AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU NOW, I'M HAPPY
LET'S DRINK TO US!
Here
Cheers!
clink
gulp
YOU SURE SEEM TO BE IN A GOOD MOOD, TEN.
OH, YEAH?
IT LOOKS THAT WAY TO ME.
WELL, YOU MAY BE RIGHT.

I FEEL LIKE TODAY MIGHT BE MY LUCKY DAY.
!!!
YOU'RE SORTA CREEPING ME OUT, DUDE.
Heh heh heh...
SAME TO YOU, KOHSHI.
badump
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT YOU NOT WANTING TO GO OUT MUCH?
ARE YOU HAVING BOY TROUBLE?
clink
NO.
I WOULDN'T EXACTLY CALL IT BOY TROUBLE.

I DON'T NEED TO HAND OUT ORDERS.
I HAVE PLENTY OF FRIENDS WHO ARE MORE THAN WILLING TO FULFILL A SIMPLE REQUEST.
hahaha
SO THAT'S WHY EVERYONE HANGS AROUND YOU? TO CARRY OUT YOUR "REQUESTS"?
I bet that guy with the drink was another one of your servants
IN THAT CASE, KOHSHI,
I JUST SO HAPPEN TO BE OUT OF ALCOHOL.
Excuse me?!
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE TRYING TO RECRUIT ME, TOO!
PLEEEEASE?
FINE, FINE.
YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT.
I'll get something for you
YOU WANT ONE OF THE SAME?
YUP.
AND GET ME A PERRIER.
SURE THING.

WELL,
I'LL JUST LEAVE IT AT THAT.
hmph.
...
EVERYONE FEELS NEED TO TAKE IT EASY ONCE IN A WHILE, RIGHT?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU'VE BEEN INTERROGATING ME ALL NIGHT!
WHAT GIVES?
HOW MANY BOY TOYS HAVE YOU GOT UNDER YOUR THUMB NOW?
heh
BOY TOYS?
I DON'T HAVE ANY AT THE MOMENT.

...
NOW THEN,
RUSTLE
TIME TO SEE IF ONE OF MY SERVANT'S DRUGS WILL REALLY DO THE TRICK.
THIS HAD BETTER WORK.

clink
clink
swish
My precious little Arata,
I'll never give you over to anyone.
Not now. Not ever.

HERE'S YOUR DRINK, MASTER TEN.
THANKS
NOW THEN,
SO I POURED YOU MY OWN SPECIAL CONCOCTION. IS THAT ALL RIGHT?
YOU WERE NEARLY OUT TOO,
SURE, I DON'T MIND.
LET'S MAKE ANOTHER TOAST.

clink

breath

Cheers!
Good job!
Good job!
clink
clink
AND NOW A TOAST...
TO ANOTHER FINE DAY OF WORK!
OOH, I LOVE GRILLED CHICKEN!
This place serves the best!
I HOPE YOU LIKE CHICKEN ON THE GRILL, KIRISHIMA-SAN!
haha!
Excuse me?
I wasn't asking you Yamauchi-senpai!

Ten

His soul is completely black. Of all the characters I've ever written, he's the darkest by far. And yet, he's still popular with the readers... Even more than Yanagi. (^^;)

Poor Yanagi...^^

smile
OH?
I'M GLAD.
smirk
IT'S PERFECTLY FINE.
just the right amount, I'd say.

HOW HAS MASTER TEN BEEN LATELY?
WHAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT BEFORE.
OH.
WELL?
WHAT ABOUT IT?
?
WHAT ABOUT WHAT?
AAH.
DELI-CIOUS!♡

YEAH?
YUP.
YOU SURE?
TO BE HONEST,
NOTHING'S NEW.
WELL...
..
NOTHING'S CHANGED..
...WITH ME.
DESPITE HOW MANY "BOY TOYS" I MAY HAVE,
NONE OF THEM PIQUE MY INTEREST.
I COULDN'T CARE LESS IF I LOST SOME OR GAINED SOME.

WELL SAID, MASTER TEN.
heh...
THERE'S ONLY ONE...
ONE SINGLE MAN WHO MEANS ANYTHING TO ME.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
YOU LOOK STUNNED.
HUH?
ERR...
WELL

I NEVER EXPECTED TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT
YOU'VE NEVER SAID ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE
I MEAN ..
..SO YOU'RE SAYING ...
...YOU HAVE-
dizzy
HM?
HAVE WHAT?
Huh?
ERR...
NOTHING. NEVER MIND.
What was that just now?
JUST THOUGHT THAT MEANT...
.. YOU HAVE SOME-ONE
... SPECIAL ..
swish
swish
What ... is going on?
KOHSHI?

What's happening?
YOU OKAY?
What's ...
HUH...?
YEAH... JUST...
WHAT, ARE YOU DRUNK ALREADY?
YOU FEELING OKAY?
NNGH ...
rattle
MY HEAD'S JUST GROGGY, THAT'S ALL.
OOPS!
CLASH

WHAT'S THE MATTER, TEN?
EVERYTHING OKAY?
...
...
WOW...
YEAH
MY FRIEND JUST HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK.
COULD YOU...
...DO ME A FAVOR AND HELP CARRY HIM TO MY CAR?
SURE THING.
KOHSHI.
CAN YOU STAND UP?
ERRMM...
SOR-RY...

Phew!
I'M STUFFED!
DID THEY BRING EVERYTHING WE ORDERED?
I'M PRETTY SURE.

Looks like we're finished here
WHAT DO YOU SAY, KIRISHIMA-SAN?
ANY LAST-MINUTE ORDERS?
Hee hee!
YUP!
Hmm
ERR, NO THANKS.
I'VE HAD ENOUGH.
I'm already full.
SAME HERE
WE HAVE WORK TOMOR-ROW,
SO WHAT SAY WE CALL IT A NIGHT?
Good idea
HUH?
WE'LL BE ABLE TO TAKE OUR TIME DRINKING THEN.
LET'S HANG OUT NEXT TIME ON FRIDAY.
UH...
SURE.

Now where's my wallet?
rummage
Time to split the bill
We're going Dutch, of course
I've got it covered
He said...
"next time".
That makes me happy
Next time...
...
...I see Yanagi kun.

I'll try telling him...
...about how I feel...
...and how we'll be from now on.
throb
throb
throb
throb
throb
What's that noise?

throb
It's like a gong.
throb
throb
throb
...going off in my head!
Kohshi?
throb
It's killing me...
-ohshi?
Shut up.
thro...
throb
It hurts so much!
Damn it...
Kohshi?
Huh?!

!!
hnngh
KOHSHI?
TEN ..?
GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE AWAKE

WHERE AM...?
WE'RE AT MY PLACE
WHY?
DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE CAR RIDE?
YEAH,
I THINK SO.
It's fuzzy though.
YOU WERE FINE GETTING IN, BUT THEN YOU COLLAPSED.
SO I TOOK YOU HOME INSTEAD.
...
OH.
OKAY.

ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU'RE OKAY.
NO BOTHER AT ALL.
SORRY FOR BRING SUCH A
... BOTHER.
YEAH.
MY HEAD'S SPLITTING, BUT...
...I'LL MANAGE.
heh.
HUH?
...HOW YOU GOT THIS WAY.
IT DOESN'T MATTER...
I DON'T USUALLY GET DRUNK LIKE THIS.
...HOW I GOT DIZZY SO FAST.
BUT I DON'T GET...

HOLD IT-
TEN?
MMPH!
click
Heh heh heh heh.

flap
YOU'RE FEELING BETTER, AREN'T YOU?
SO WHAT'S THE HARM?
WHAT ARE YOU SUDDENLY-
HOLD YOUR HORSES
THIS IS THE VERY REASON I INVITED YOU OUT IN THE FIRST PLACE.
GET IT NOW?
kiss

SO LET'S ENJOY OURSELVES, LIKE THE GOOD OLD DAYS.
Just a few minutes before 10 o'clock.
I wonder if Takashi's back already
clomp
clomp
clomp

NAH, NOT LIKELY.
Heh, heh!
slump slump slump...
Heh heh
heh heh
WHAT'S THE MATTER, KOHSHI?
YOU HAVEN'T MADE A SOUND.

thump
...!
throb
...
URGH!

SORRY.
UH..
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
EY
LOOK, MY HEAD'S REALLY KILLING ME.
I'M JUST NOT
IN THE MOOD.
NOT SO FAST.

SORRY TO SAY, BUT I'M ALREADY IN THE MOOD.
creak
Hmph!
AND IF YOU'RE NOT,
THEN I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE YOU.
slip
WAIT!
NO!
STOP IT!
TEN!
TE...
...!

T-TEN!
STOP IT!
I'M SERIOUS!
—...!
slurp
suck
lick
...
Pfft!
SINCE WHEN DID YOU CARE ABOUT THINGS LIKE LOYALTY?
...YOU HAD SOMEONE SPECIAL?
DIDN'T YOU TELL ME.
C'MON!
THEN YOU SH-SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS!

THAT'S NOT LIKE YOU, KOUSHI
/ gulp /
...WHETHER I HAD SOMEONE SPECIAL OR NOT.
YOU'VE NEVER CARED BEFORE ...
AND DOESN'T THIS FEEL GOOD?
WELL?
TH-
THAT WAS BECAUSE ...
WHAT WAS YOUR MOTTO AGAIN? "AS LONG AS IT FEELS GOOD"?
TEN...!
throb
...!

creak
clomp clomp clomp clomp
clatch
clomp clomp.
Let's see.
3
...!
slurp
suck slurp

FEELS TOO GOOD, RIGHT?
heh.
heh heh
shlick
clatter clatter clatter
clatch
shlip
shloop
shlick
Shloop
Heh heh heh heh.

I'D DO ANY-THING FOR PLEASURE.
I'M THE SAME WAY, KOHSHI
SO WHEN-EVER YOU'RE RE/DY,
DO IT.
SIP
HURRY..
DAMMIT!
Jump

clomp
clomp
clomp
clomp
clomp
clatch
grab
HUH?
IT LOCKED WHEN I TURNED THE KEY.
One more time.
clatch
He really ought to learn to lock the door.
TAKA-SHI?
Must mean Takashi's already home

TAKASHI?
YOU HOME?
CLICK
TAKASHI?
IF YOU'RE HERE, AT LEAST-

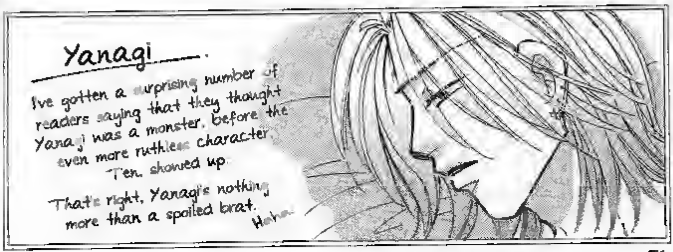
huffa!
huffa!
OH!
—...!

Gasp!
YA-NAGI-KU-
S-SORRY
...FOR INTER-RUPTING!
A-ARATA?!

HUH?
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
tmp tmp tmp
!
Shit!
Heh heh heh!
I'D LOVE TO KNOW.
WHAT DO YOU PLAN ON TELLING HIM?
WHAT? YOU'RE GOING TO CHASE AFTER ARATA?
TEN...?

breath

TEN...?


Yanagi
I've gotten a surprising number of readers saying that they thought Yanagi was a monster, before the even more ruthless character Ten showed up.
That's right, Yanagi's nothing more than a spoiled brat. Hehe~

IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME.
CHOO
WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF HE CAUGHT US IN THE ACT?
WELL?
WHAT'S THE BIG RUSH FOR?
AFTER ALL,
YOU AND I HAVE FUCKED PLENTY OF TIMES BEFORE.
!
UNLESS YOU FEEL LIKE YOU OWE HIM AN EXPLANATION NOW?

Slide
SINCE WHEN DID YOU TWO ..
..GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER THAT WELL?
Bump
THAT PERHAPS HE'S THE ONLY ONE YOU LOVE?
DO YOU NEED TO TELL HIM THAT IT'S NOT WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE?
...
I DIDN'T KNOW ..
..YOU WERE ON A FIRST NAME BASIS, EITHER
What were we just doing?
...!
I WAS JUST-
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT!
NO!

REMEMBER WHAT I SAID BEFORE?
HUH?
...WHO GETS TO CALL [illegible] BY HIS FIRST NAME.
SORRY, BUT I'M [illegible] ONLY ONE
THERE'S ONLY ONE MAN WHO MEANS ANYTHING TO ME.

YEAH.
WHAT OF IT?
WHOA
BUT AREN'T YOU TWO...
...Y'KNOW, BROTHERS?
WHAT...?
...!
flick
PFFF...
AND I WON'T STAND...
...TO HAVE ANOTHER MAN SWOOP IN AND TRY TO TAKE HIM.

hahal
OH, WELL.
NOT THAT IT MATTERS NOW.
AFTER CATCHING US IN SUCH A COMPROMISING POSITION,
IT'S UNLIKELY HE'LL EVER COME NEAR YOU AGAIN.
Heh heh heh heh
WHAT?
throb
AUGH!
...
WAIT A MINUTE...

OH?
SO YOU'VE FIGURED IT OUT?
TEN,
DID YOU SLIP ME SOMETHING?
YOU'RE SMARTER THAN I THOUGHT.
Heh heh!

ONE OF MY LOYAL SERVANTS HOOKED ME UP WITH THE DRUG.
JUST A LITTLE.
AND DON'T WORRY.
HE TOLD ME IT'S JUST A KIND OF ANTI-DEPRESSANT.
IT SHOULDN'T LEAVE ANYTHING BEHIND

IF IT HELPS ANY,
I'M SORRY.
S-SORRY?
SEEING AS IT'S GIVING YOU ONE HELL OF A MIGRAINE.
haha.
AFTER ALL YOU'VE DONE...
WHY?
SETTING THE WHOLE THING UP WAS A PAIN,
BUT I COULDN'T ASK FOR BETTER TIMING.
YOU SEE,

ARATA DOESN'T NEED ANYONE ELSE.
ASIDE FROM ME, THAT IS.
NOW THAT I'VE CLEARED UP ANY MISUNDER-STANDINGS,
I TRUST YOU TO NOT STEP FOOT NEAR HIM AGAIN

Gasp
"Naoto-san."
"I've never felt this way before."
"I finally understand!"
"I love you."
smirk
I HIGHLY DOUBT IT.
...YOU WOULD SAY ANYTHING STUPID AT THIS POINT.
"I'm in love with you."

KASHIWAGI-SAN TOLD ME THE WHOLE THING.♡
Heh heh heh heh
—...!
EVERY LAST DETAIL OF YOUR FIRST LOVE.
!
"Please, tell me..."
"...you feel the same way for me."

...
YOU'RE NOTHING... NOTHING BUT A DEVIL!
TEN...
HOW COULD YOU?
THANKS!
YOU THINK SO?
I COULDN'T CARE LESS.
BUT SEEING AS WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN,

SO LONG, FOREVER.

pfff..
clink
squish
squish
—...

...!
clatch

S/M
NOW THEN,
TIME FOR PHASE TWO...
Creak
♫
Hm-hm-hmm
click

ARATA.
...
MIND IF I COME IN?
jolt
ARATA?
knock knock
clatch

I'M SO SORRY...
...YOU HAD TO SEE THAT.
OH, ARATA...
I PROMISE I WON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN.
twitch
HE JUST LEFT, SO THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
...
IT'S... OKAY.
I DON'T MIND.

—...
HE ALREADY LEFT?
YES.
I SEE
HEY
YOU DON'T HATE ME, DO YOU?
HUH?
N-NOW WHY WOULD I EVER...?
OF COURSE I DON'T!
RE-L-LY?
YOU PROMISE?

kuuu
Thank goodness!
I was so scared you hated me!
TA-
TAKASHI!
AFTER ALL,
nod
OF COURSE ...
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT SLEEPING WITH MEN, RIGHT?
bajump
YOU WOULD NEVER ...
.. DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT. RIGHT, ARATA?
...

WELL, I'M GLAD THAT'S SETTLED!
S-SORRY. WOULD YOU MIND IF I CHANGED OUT OF THESE CLOTHES?
...
HUH?
SURE.
I'LL START BOILING THE WATER.
LET'S HAVE SOME TEA WHEN YOU'RE DONE.
THANKS, BUT...
...IT'S LATE ENOUGH AS IT IS. I SHOULD REST.

bgm
I SEE
OKAY, THEN. GOOD NIGHT.
GOOD NIGHT.
...
Sigh...
Yanagi-kun. .

Then it all made sense
At first,
I couldn't understand what he was doing here
Takashi introduced him to me as a friend from the start.
He was just another one of his "friends" he's been bringing home all these years.
That's right.
He's a senior...
...in your school?
Yup.
Huh?
Still in high school
Just a friend.

creak creak
AH!
So Yanagi-kun was just another one of Takashi's sex friends!
...!
flop
heh heh heh

And yet...
The answer was in front of me all along.
but I was so busy worrying about my feelings that I never realized!
OH, RIGHT
ALMOST FORGOT
THERE'S ONE LAST THING I HAVE TO DO.
And yet

chirp
chirp
Huh?
click
click
click
FOMA
MORN-
ING?
Yanagi-kun...

HAVE TO GET ..
...TO WORK.
CREAK
MURMUR
MURMUR
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
...

THE SAMPLES HAVE COME IN.
OH!
I MEAN, Y-YES?
KIRISHIMA-SAN?
-SAN?
-MA-SAN?
gasp!
click click
You got it!
What do I do now?
clatter
THANKS.
OH, RIGHT. THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO COME IN TODAY.
I'LL BE RIGHT OVER ONCE I'VE FINISHED WITH THIS.

Can I just let it end this way, without ever talking to him?
Should I pretend nothing happened
...just like I hoped at the very start?
Simply pre-tend...
...like none of it hap-pened?
...!

...omp
domp
domp
domp
—...

ding dong
...
ding dong
ding dong
SORRY, THERE'S NO ONE HOME...
...EVEN THOUGH THE LIGHTS ARE ON.
SHUDDUP ...
roll
...
ding dong
ding dong
ding dong
SHEESH, WHAT A PAIN IN THE-
Leave me alone!
ding dong

FINE, GIVE IT A REST ALREADY!
WHO THE HELL IS IT?!
It's me.
...NAOTO-SAN?

breath

OH!
KIRISHIMA-SAN, GOOD JOB TODAY
Oh.
YEAH, YOU TOO.
...
I'LL BE HEADING HOME NOW.
clomp

clomp
clomp
...NAOTO-SAN?
clomp
clomp...

BINGO.
...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
...!
HUH?
DIDN'T I TELL YOU I'D BE SEEING YOU AGAIN?
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN BY THE BAR SINCE THEN,
AND YOU WON'T RETURN MY CALLS

So I thought I'd just stop by
IT'S CALLED TAKING A HINT!
I DON'T WANT-
Oh, by the way,
I heard what hap pened.
I SAW TEN-KUN THE OTHER DAY,
AND HE SAID YOU TWO HAD A NASTY FALLING OUT.
...!!

NOW, COME ON.
HOW LONG DO YOU INTEND TO MAKE ME STAND HERE AND TALK TO THE INTER-COM?
OPEN UP ALREADY.
FINE.
...
THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT, TOO.
I'M OPENING THE DOOR.

HUH.
look
THIS PLACE SURE BRINGS BACK MEMO-RIES.
...
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS MESS?
HOW LONG HAVE YOU STAYED COOPED UP IN HERE?
HAVE YOU BEEN FALLING ASLEEP DRUNK EVERY NIGHT?
turn
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

I'M OLD ENOUGH TO DRINK NOW.
HEH!
YEAH.
I SUPPOSE THAT'S TRUE.
MORE IMPORTANTLY,
WHAT DID YOU ... TALK WITH TEN ABOUT?
WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?

HUH ...?
I MEAN ...
...—
...EVERY-THING!
YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE OF SOMETHING HE SAID, RIGHT?
WHAT ARE YOU TWO HIDING?!
HIDING? NOTHING AT ALL.
I JUST HAPPENED TO MEET HIM AT A BAR.
IS IT A CRIME TO TALK WITH HIM?

I WANT TO KNOW...
...WHAT YOU TWO TALKED ABOUT!
Hmm.
FINE. THE REASON I'M HERE...
...I BECAUSE TEN-KUN CALLED ME LAST NIGHT.
HE SAID YOU TWO HAD A FIGHT, AND THAT HE WAS WORRIED YOU WERE TAKING IT HARD.
SO HE ASKED ME TO COME BY AND SEE HOW YOU WERE DOING. THAT'S ALL.
...!
Tch!
DAMN TEN...
WELL, THAT...
...AND OTHER THINGS.

THERE WERE A FEW TIMES I TOLD HIM ABOUT OUR PAST IN BED
IN B-BED?!
THEN.
YOU'VE ALWAYS...
...BEEN THIS WAY.
...
I SEE.
I SEE NOW.
Yes...
...since the first time we met.

After our chance meeting,
I became infatuated with Kashiwagi
I considered him to be my true lover
And I thought he felt the same way about me, too
That's how I spent that first year...
...in absolute bliss.
But as I stayed caught up in my fantasies,
Kashiwagi's attitude began to change.
click
NAOTO-SAN?
No one is available to take your call.
Please leave your message after the tone...
OH.
But even when I left my messages,
he never once called me back.

This went on for weeks, and whenever I asked why,
he would simply say he was busy with work.
We started seeing each other less and less.
And...
RRRING
RRRING
YEAH?
OH.
...
WHAT'S UP?
UH-HUH.
I SEE
...even when we did meet, I felt like there was always someone else there taking his attention.
My heart felt like it would break under the pain.

rattle
After that I started to suspect every man and woman he knew..
and finally followed him back
KOHSHI?
NAOTO-SAN...?
ERR... EXCUSE ME A MINUTE.
KASHIWAGI-SAN?
YOU, COME WITH ME

I JUST HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET A HOLD OF YOU
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I JUST...
I... MISSED YOU.
SIGH
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD...
TELL ME.
WHY DON'T WE SEE EACH OTHER AS MUCH AS WE USED TO?
I...
KOHSHI.
YOU HAVE TO STOP DOING THIS.
IT'S PATHETIC.

NO! I WON'T!
GRIP
I LOVE YOU!
I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU,
I'VE NEVER FELT THIS WAY BEFORE
I FINALLY UNDER-STAND!
NAOTO-SAN!

PLEASE TELL ME
...YOU FEEL THE SAME WAY...
...FOR ME.
NAOTO-SAN...?
haha hal
Ahha hahal
Pfft!
hahahahal

ha...
WHAT A JOKE.
ARE YOU FOR REAL?
...
THIS...
THIS ISN'T A JOKE!
I REALLY MEAN IT!
YEAH, YEAH
I BELIEVE YOU.
I UNDER-STAND.

BUT WHY...
NAOTO-SA-
JUST LISTEN TO ME.
WHAT?
YES, BUT I NEED YOU TO RUN ALONG HOME NOW.
Phew.
REALLY, NAOTO-SAN?
THIS WEEK-END?
YUP.
IT'S ALREADY GETTING LATE.
HUH?
I'LL SEE YOU THIS WEEKEND.
COME TO MY PLACE.
I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU.

...
OKAY!
AHA.
YOU MADE IT.
COME ON IN.
DOOOG
DOOOG
The weekend couldn't come soon enough.
hehehehe!
Ahaha!

IS THERE SOMEONE ELSE HERE?
JUST SOME FRIENDS OF MINE.
THEY'VE ALL BEEN DYING TO MEET YOU.
...?
I was disappointed, but still came in.
HEY!
WELCOME TO THE PARTY!

AH!
WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
COME OVER HERE.
OH, HIS SKIN'S SO SMOOTH!
...!
WAIT, YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG-
LET GO OF ME!
I DON'T THINK SO.
gasp!
NAOTO-SAN?!

COME ON
KOHSHI.
THERE'S NO REASON TO FUSS OVER ME ALONE.
SURE, I MAY HAVE BEEN YOUR FIRST LOVER,
BUT-LIFE'S SO MUCH MORE FULFILLING
WHEN YOU SHARE IT WITH LOTS OF OTHER PEOPLE
HE'S RIGHT YOU KNOW.
NAOTO-SAN!
ZIP
!

AND DON'T THINK ...
... THAT I HATE YOU.
HOWEVER, IF YOU HADN'T GROWN UP SO DAMN FAST,
I MAY HAVE KEPT YOU AROUND A LITTLE LONGER.
Heh
...!
IT'S A SHAME LITTLE BOYS ONLY LAST SO LONG.
YOU THINK SO?
HE STILL LOOKS PLENTY CUTE TO ME.

After the ordeal, Naoto san's last words to me were about...
...how things like love came second to physical pleasure.
For a while, I walked around like a zombie
But I managed to keep everyone from noticing what had happened.
Then my mother said something to me.
KOH-SHI?
HAS KASHI-WAGI-SAN BEEN OVER LATELY?
WHY DO YOU ASK?
WELL, REMEMBER HOW MY COMPANY GOT A NEW BUILDING LAST YEAR?
IT SEEMS HIS CONTRACT ENDED, SO I WAS THINKING OF TREATING HIM OUT TO DINNER.
...
That man...

haha
ha!
hahaha
haha!
All I could do was laugh
ha...!
And just like that, he completely disappeared from my life
...until he was promoted to his branch in Sendai six months later.
I didn't know how long his contract was for...
It turned out his job was specialized in selling interior design and office supplies to new buildings.
...had met my parents countless times during his visits.

I started hitting the streets in a daze after that
I went home with any man that talked to me ..
..and had sex.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
YOU'VE BEEN OUT OF IT ALL NIGHT.
AH!
AAH!
AH!
Even if I didn't care at all about them,
my body still trembled with orgasm
I was convinced then—

...that love was only for fools.
I refused to believe...
dom?
dom?
dom...
...in the emotion called "love" anymore

breath

clench
Phew...
...

End...?
My editor, who'd been waiting for TenXPrata was thrilled when she saw the last scene in this volume. She said she loves my writing and couldn't wait to see more! Seems that was the perfect ending she was looking for... It cracks me up just thinking about it. Grin
Could this really be the End?!

I SEE THAT TALKING TO YOU NOW WOULD BE POINTLESS.
DO ME A FAVOR AND LEAVE
IS THAT REALLY ALL?
HA?
YOU'RE NO FUN.
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE WE'VE LAST MET LIKE THIS.
WHY NOT GET STRAIGHT TO THE DIRTY TALK?
Hmph
DON'T GIVE ME THAT BULLSHIT
I'M SURE YOUR WIFE IS WORRIED SICK ABOUT YOU.
QUIT WASTING MY TIME SO LATE AT NIGHT -
- AND GO HOME ALREADY

HOW DID YOU KNOW I'M MARRIED?
HOW ELSE?
AFTER YOUR TRANSFER WAS CONFIRMED,
YOU RUSHED TO MARRY YOUR COLLEGE SWEETHEART
MY MOM TOLD ME THE WHOLE THING.
AH, I SEE.
So that's where you get your information
Ha
STILL, WHAT'S THE HARM?
SHE MAY BE MY WIFE. BUT THAT DOESN'T CHANGE WHAT WE HAVE HERE
YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW WHEN TO QU-

LOOKS LIKE YOU HAVE A VISITOR.
ding dooong
THIS DAY JUST COULDN'T GET ANY WORSE!
ANYWAY!
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN FOOLING AROUND WITH YOU...
...SO LEAVE!
stomp stomp stomp

YE AH?!
bang
twitch
UH...
UM..
I, ER...
ARATA--?

Hmm?
...
HE MUST HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO YOU.
LET'S SHOW HIM IN.
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
QUIT SNEAKING UP BEHIND ME!
ARATA?
gasp!
NAOTO-SAN, NO!
beep
THAT WASN'T YOUR CALL TO MAKE!

NOW, YOU STAY HERE AND DON'T MOVE!
GOT IT?
...!
FIRST YOU TELL ME TO LEAVE, NOW YOU WANT ME TO STAY
MAKE UP YOUR MIND ALREADY.
—!...
Heh her heh
SCUFF
CLATCH

UM..
I'M SORRY.
DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE OVER?
...
YEAH
BOW
ARATA...?
IT'S NOT WHAT...
...YOU THINK.
INSIDE IS JUST A LITTLE MESSY, THAT'S ALL.
I SEE.
...
SO, WHAT IS IT?
YOU FORGOT SOMETHING AGAIN?

THEN WHAT...
...ARE YOU HERE FOR?
I GUESS NOT.

I WAS PRETTY SURE...
...THERE WASN'T ANY REASON FOR US TO MEET ANYMORE.
YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT, TOO.
BUT...

I DON'T KNOW.

SOR-RY!
...BUT, UH...
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT...
IT'S JUST...
...
WHAT?
I'VE BEEN...
...THINKING A LOT LATELY...
BUT I CAN'T...
...LET IT END THIS WAY...
..WITHOUT TALKING ABOUT IT FIRST...
.. ABOUT EVERY-THING THAT'S HAPPENED
AND YOU, YANAGI-KUN...
AND ABOUT...
...MY OWN FEELINGS

His own...
...feelings?
SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED SINCE WE FIRST MET.
I MEAN, A LOT!
AT FIRST, I WAS A COMPLETE WRECK.
EVERY SINGLE DAY,
I USED TO WONDER WHY THIS HAD TO HAPPEN TO ME.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

I DON'T REMEMBER WHEN MY THOUGHTS STARTED TO CHANGE.
BUT NOW,
IT'S DIF-- FERENT.
THE OTHER DAY...
---WHEN I CAUGHT YOU AND TAKASHI TOGETHER,
I REALIZED THE KIND OF RELATIONSHIP THAT YOU TWO ALWAYS HAD.
AND YET,
DESPITE THAT,

I FIND I CAN'T JUST FORGET ...
...EVERY-THING THAT'S HAPPENED BETWEEN US.
SO...
...I NEED TO ASK.
ON THAT NIGHT ..
ON THAT RAINY NIGHT.
..WHEN I SLEPT OVER HERE...

...WAS IT JUST MY IMAGINATION...
...WHEN I FELT LIKE WE UNDERSTOOD EACH OTHER?
On that...
...rainy night...
...
Even after I'd been dumped by Naoto-san,
I never once spent the night..
...with anyone I slept with.
MMM..
And yet, that night...

squirm
squirm
..I felt some-thing .
...so nice and warm
I FELT LIKE THE WALL WE HAD BETWEEN US HAD FINALLY FALLEN.
ARA-
clank

Naato-san.
Oh!
hahaha!
What a joke
Are you for real?
smirk
See, what did I say?
Things like love come second to physical pleasure.
clench
...!

YANAGI-KUN?
I'M SORRY TO SAY...
...YOU HAD THE WRONG IDEA ALL THIS TIME
YOU'RE RIGHT.
—...!

I HAPPEN TO SLEEP IN LATE ONE MORNING...
AND YOU GO THINKING IT'S A DECLARATION OF LOVE?
JUST WHAT I SAID.
WRONG IDEA?
YOU REALLY READ TOO MUCH INTO THINGS
I'VE DONE THE SAME WITH DOZENS OF PARTNERS...
...BESIDES YOU.
!

TAKASHI...?
...he's way too proper
and inflexible.
But...
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE
...THAT YOU AND TEN ARE EVEN TWINS
twitch
...
Unlike Ten...
NAOTO-SAN...
WELL, I'LL BE..
NO WAY! YOU'RE TEN-KUN'S BROTHER?
Jasp!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
I TOLD YOU TO STAY HIDDEN!
COME NOW, NO HARM DONE.
NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M KASHIWAGI
ER..
HMM..
stare stare
YOU CERTAINLY ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOUR BROTHER.

TEN-KUN'S MUCH MORE APPEALING AND EASY TO GET ALONG WITH.
NAOTO-SAN!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
But—

...I love his awkwardness
YOU CAN'T COMPARE HIM TO TEN!
...more than I'd ever like that monster
SHIT!
I GUESS...
...HE'S RIGHT.

TAKASHI'S FAR BETTER THAN ME.
ARATA?
NO.
IT'S OKAY
HUH?
I ALREADY KNOW
SORRY.
...FOR SHOWING UP LIKE THIS.
Um ARATA-KUN?
HUH? WHAT GIVES?

FARE-WELL
ARA-!

What got into him?
HE'S LEAVING ALREADY?
Ten-kun's fine and all, but I was going to say I like how Kate-kun is so quiet and handsome.
...
SO, I GUESS YOU KNOW BOTH OF THEM?
smirk
AREN'T YOU GOING TO GO AFTER HIM?
!
WHY SHOULD I?!

This is how it has to be!
DAMMIT!
clomp clomp
clomp..
There's no other way!
...!
clomp..

I guess I was the one...
...seeing things that weren't there.
I was a fool to think there was even a chance!
How dare you try to compare him to Ten?!
...!
I know that!
I've known that...
...ever since I was a kid.
Oh...
My, Arata-kun, that's an awfully difficult book you're reading.
MY SON HASN'T READ A SINGLE BOOK. HE JUST PLAYS HIS VIDEO GAMES ALL DAY!
YOU MUST BE A SMART BOY!

Everyone always preferred him over me
It's not that I was hated
ARATA-KUN CERTAINLY IS A SMART BOY,
BUT ..
It's just that everyone liked Takashi more.
TAKASHI-KUN, YOU'RE MUCH MORE CHARMING!
..IT'S A SHAME HE DOESN'T ACT MORE HIS AGE.
Yay!
WHY, OF COURSE
CAN I OPEN THIS NOW?
Your gift
WELL...
IT'S NOTHING SPECIAL
I just like books more than games
Auntie! Hey, Auntie!

That's why...
That's why...
...
I remember now.
That's why I went out that night
That first night I met Yanagi-kun,
I was drunk.
Why can't I be more like Takashi?
The thought raced through my head over and over.
Like Takashi...
Like Takashi...

I thought, if I could act like him,
I could be more like him
That's why...
I got more drunk than I'd ever gotten and pretended to be Takashi...
I want to be more like Takashi
But there was no way...
Clatch...
I'M HOME!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ALONE IN THE DARK?
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
ARATA?
...I could ever pull it off
THERE, THERE.

WHO WOULD EVER MAKE MY PRECIOUS ARATA CRY LIKE THIS?
MY... ARATA.
MY PRECIOUS, PRECIOUS BROTHER
There's really nothing cuter
than seeing Arata cry
breath 3 / END

breath

AH!
AAH!
Creak
Creak
It was like any other night we'd spent together.
Creak...
AH!
AH!
After that...
—...!
He called me over and we had sex
After that...

OH..
OKAY...
THE BATHROOM'S FREE AGAIN
ARATA-SAN?
creak
Clock ...
look
Let's see
Where's the clock in here?
look
What time is it?
HERE'S THE TIME, IF YOU NEED IT.
!
YOUR GLASSES?
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
It's on your face

Dun-da-da-dun!
?
?
beep
Plasma TV
HUH?
SHIT, I'M LATE!
SWEET! MADE IT!
IT JUST STARTED.
IS THAT A TELE-VISION DRAMA?
YEAH.
WHAT OF IT?

I'VE JUST STARTED GETTING INTO THIS SERIES.
I TAKE IT YOU DON'T WATCH ANY?
Doesn't watch television at all for that matter
ER..
YEAH
THIS ONE'S PRETTY GOOD.
THE STORY'S STRONG,
BUT THE MAIN CHARACTER'S THE BEST PART OF IT!
OH?
WAIT.
ARE YOU A FAN...
.. OF THAT CELEBRITY?
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THAT.
SAY

Which color do you prefer?
Which ones?
I see.
...
So this is his type.
THE ACTOR SURE IS PRETTY.
Humble
YEAH, BETTER THAN PRETTY!
I LOVE THE WAY THE EYES SORTA PULL UP.
EYES?

Sexy and mischievous?
?
?
Some-how,
I think I'm missing some-thing here.
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THAT MISCHIEVOUS ATTITUDE THAT CLICKS WITH ME
Clearly has droopy eyes
THE PROFILE FROM CHIN TO NECK IS ALSO SMOOTH AND SEXY.
BUT THE BEST PART WOULD HAVE TO BE THAT MANLY BACK.
Whaat?!
You were talking about the male actor all along?!
And yes, this is a true story
Everyone has their off days
After that... / END